

3 March 2017

Update on Cervical Screening

Dear Doctor,

As you are aware, May 2017 was to see the "Renewal" of screening for cervical cancer being implemented, which was a move to a National Screening Program based on molecular testing of cervical smear samples for high risk HPV infection, rather than the current manual screening of slides under a microscope.

Consequently, we have invested significant resources in preparing for this transition by a controlled reduction in cytology staff numbers.

Unfortunately due to circumstances out of our control, on the 23rd February the Government announced a delay in this transition and **moved the implementation date to 1st December**.

As a result all labs across Australia, both public and private, have been left with an acute cytology staff shortage until the revised implementation date of 1st December 2017.

What does this mean for you and your patients?

- The screening and recall of patients will remain as per the current existing system until 1 December.
- Our laboratory quality assurance processes will remain unchanged throughout.
- Turnaround time for Pap smear reports will be significantly longer.
- Any smears that are marked urgent for medical reasons e.g. abnormal bleeding, are still prioritised and will be managed accordingly.

In addition the Government has announced that from 1st May to 1st December there will be a Medicare item number for liquid based cytology (LBC) covering both ThinPrep and SurePath. This will allow you to choose either conventional glass slides or a LBC sample. Please do not send in both on a single patient after 1 May 2017.

We are grateful for your continued support during this transition period and thank you for your understanding.

Yours sincerely



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